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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: TOP STORIES, TERRORISM/MILITARY,
MISCELLANEOUS - NOVEMBER 03, 2009

Summary: Reports of suicide bomb blasts in Rawalpindi (35 dead, 65 wounded) and Lahore (25 wounded) dominated all media Tuesday. The government's decision not to present the controversial National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO, a presidential ordinance promulgated by former President Musharraf to provide immunity to politicians, involved in corruption and other cases, that hold public offices) bill before the parliament was widely covered, and a key government ally (Muthaida Quami Movement - MQM) advised President Zardari to step down. Pakistan Army Spokesman's claimed that "Pakistan has found concrete evidence of India's involvement behind the trouble in South Waziristan" garnering a great deal of attention in the local press. In its editorial on the recent suicide attack in Rawalpindi, the English language daily, "The News," observed that "there has been a shift in terrorist targeting since the death of Baitullah Mehsud" implying that militant attacks against civilian instead of law enforcement targets has been a conscious shift designed to stifle Pakistan's military operations. Commenting on the ongoing review of the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan, the prestigious English language daily, "Dawn," noted that "Pakistan's inability to put its own house in order makes it less of a credible interlocutor elsewhere." End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: Terrorists target 35 senior citizens in Rawalpindi
"Dawn" (11/03)

"Thirty-five people were killed and 65 others injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a branch of the National Bank in Rawalpindi on Monday." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

News Story: Police avert terror attack in Lahore "Daily Times"
(11/03)

"Police on Monday thwarted a terrorist attack targeting a police check-post at the Babu Sabu Interchange of the Lahore-Islamabad motorway, an entry point into Lahore.... Upon being stopped by police for a routine inspection, the man got out of the car's passenger seat and detonated his suicide jacket, injuring 25 people, including the car's driver." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

News Story: PPP will not take NRO to parliament "Dawn" (11/03)

"Politics in the country was sent on yet another major tailspin on Monday as some of the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) government's trusted allies, the MQM (Muthidda Quami Movement) among them,

threatened to vote against the National Reconciliation Ordinance, and the main opposition PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) launched a new tirade on the issue, forcing the beleaguered President, Asif Ali Zardari to succumb to the pressure and agree against presenting the 'corruption laundering' bill before the parliament." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

News Story: Mr. President! It's time: Altaf "Daily Times" (11/03)

"Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain on Monday advised President Asif Ali Zardari to "make a sacrifice" for the sake of country and the democratic system.... 'I appeal to the president, his friends and loyalists not to derail democracy, and produce themselves before the people to save the system, and tell them that they are not presenting the NRO in the assembly,' he said."

News Story: Proof of Indian hand in South Waziristan: army "Dawn" (11/03)

"Pakistan has found concrete evidence of India's involvement in militancy in South Waziristan and decided to take up the matter with New Delhi. This was disclosed by Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira and military spokesman Major-General Athar Abbas at a press briefing on the progress of operation Rah-i-Nijat in Islamabad on Monday." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: Operation a Success: Kayani "The Nation" (11/03)

"Chief of Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has said the backbone of terrorists has been broken and the operation Rah-e-Nijat is proceeding along successfully. He expressed these views in a meeting held with Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at the PM House on Monday."

News Story: Twelve militants killed in South Waziristan "Dawn" (11/03)

"Twelve militants were killed during the past 24 hours in the South Waziristan operation, Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Athar Abbas said."

News Story: Kayani raises ISAF border posts issue with McChrystal "Daily Times" (11/03)

"Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani on Monday took up the vacation of border posts by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops with ISAF Commander General Stanley McChrystal. A source privy to the meeting said the two officials exchanged views on the law and order situation in Afghanistan and the recent military offensive in South Waziristan."

News Story: Government Offers Reward For Leads on Taliban Chiefs "Dawn" (11/03)

"The Government of Pakistan offered rewards worth five million dollars for information leading to the capture, dead or alive, of Tehreek-e-Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud and 18 other lieutenants."

News Story: UN pulls out foreign staff from FATA, NWFP "Daily Times" (11/03)

"The United Nations on Monday announced immediate withdrawal of its staff from the NWFP and FATA due to the deteriorating security situation there. The measure was taken after UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon assessed the security situation in the northwestern region at 'Phase-IV.'"

News Story: Seven Taliban Killed in Bajaur "Daily Times" (11/03)

"Seven Taliban were killed in airstrikes and clashes with security personnel in Bajaur, destroying four terrorist hideouts on Monday."

Editorial: Pity The Civilians, an editorial in the populist, often

sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/03)

"There has been a shift in terrorist targeting since the death of Baitullah Mehsud.... It is hard to fathom what the terrorists hope to achieve by this. On the one hand they may think that they are 'forced' to do this because of the actions of the military and civilian agencies that have them under pressure. On the other terrorist thinking may be that by bombing the innocent they can 'force the military and civilian agencies to cease and desist from their pressurizing. They would be wrong in either case. We cannot, will not, allow this country to be brought low by terrorism. We cannot allow a small section of society to impose its will by force upon the rest of us, despite the knowledge that it is going to be civilians who increasingly pay the ultimate price for our victory.

Editorial: Consulting Pakistan, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/03)

"'Because we understand the area, we understand the tribes, we understand the local customs and traditions and our input might be useful for the Americans' they should consult Pakistan on their on-going review of the strategy for Afghanistan. Thus has spoken Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his advice makes much sense.... So going forward, the U.S. will have to find a way to work with local partners in addition to a weak, discredited central government and that's precisely where Pakistan's help can be most valuable, helping the Americans and Afghans differentiate between the various players.... Then there is the fact that, as yesterday's bombing in Rawalpindi again highlighted, Pakistan's inability to put its own house in order makes it less of a credible interlocutor elsewhere."

Editorial: Rawalpindi Tragedy: Need To Intensify The Operation

Against Terrorism, an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (circ, 25,000) (11/03)

"Keeping the onset of winter in mind, it is imperative to speed up the operation [in Waziristan] so that militants' remaining strength is diminished. At the same time security of all institutions and buildings in the country needs to intensified. A thorough investigation into the Rawalpindi attack is also necessary to get to the perpetrators of this attack so that suitable planning can be done for the future."

Editorial: Another blast, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (11/03)

"The sudden rise in terrorist attacks shows that the army action against the extremists is proving effective, and the militants are now making last ditch efforts to create mayhem in the country.... The militants are determined and consistent in their extremist policy and will not give it up. The government, too, should remain determined in rooting out extremism by using military force."

Editorial: Rawalpindi Suicide Blast And The Overall Security Situation, an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (11/03)

"Interior Minister Malik has said that no foreigner will be allowed to possess weapons... Perhaps by foreigners, he (Mr. Malik) means the Afghan nationals, otherwise everybody knows that the Americans enjoy full impunity in this regard. In case, these Americans are arrested the Interior Ministry releases them instantly under the pressure from the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. To speak the truth, by adopting these double standards, we cannot put an end to the lawlessness, let alone the terrorism. The repeated assertions of the Interior Minister that there are no Blackwater operatives or the U.S. Marines in Pakistan cannot alter ground reality that these people are present in Islamabad and Peshawar with their nefarious designs."

Editorial: A time to think!, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (11/03)

"Hillary Clinton's love affair with Pakistan was short-lived. Back in the U.S. she flatly denied the charge that India was sparking

unrest in Balochistan. She also observed that since Pakistan could criticize the Kerry-Lugar Bill, the U.S. also had the right to protest Al-Qaeda's presence on its land and demand action against it.... The tone and tenor of her words convey the usual tendency of viewing Pakistan with a jaundiced eye.... At this point in time, if our leaders look around, there is no dearth of countries, which have carried themselves with integrity and grace in their relationship with the U.S. A rethink of our 'friendship' with the U.S. is definitely in order."

Editorial: Pakistan And U.S.: At the Crossroads?, an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (11/03)

"Secretary of State Clinton has said that mutual mistrust exists in the Pak-U.S. relations. She has also blamed Pakistan for supporting Al Qaeda and the Taliban. It seems that the real motive of such allegations by the U.S. State Department is to mount pressure on Pakistan. In fact, Washington is not in a position to ditch Islamabad at this critical juncture, because the latter's support is vital in the war on terror. So far, Pakistan has suffered tremendous material and human losses in this war which cannot be redeemed with the meager largesse under the Kerry-Lugar Bill. Pakistan and the U.S. do not have common interests, and soon both countries would be at the crossroads."

Editorial: Hillary Clinton's Statement: New Way Of Pressurizing Pakistan, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (11/03)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that if Pakistanis can speak on Kerry-Lugar Bill then we too are right in expressing our concern about al-Qaeda and Taliban presence in Pakistan.... Hillary Clinton has also rejected the allegation of Indian interference in Balochistan, saying neither we were given any evidence nor have we given any such information.... If Pakistani

leadership did not really give her the evidence then it is the worst example of neglect of national interests. The nation has the right to know as on whose behest the Indian interference and terrorism are being overlooked and why. Hillary Clinton's accusations on being unnerved over people's concern on KLB is a moment of reflection for Pakistan's political and military leaderships and an expression of American designs. It is possible that America has already planned direct or indirect military intervention in Balochistan or any other area of Pakistan and is looking for a justification through a propaganda campaign."

Editorial: U.S. appears to be on right track, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (11/03)

"According to a report appearing in this newspaper, the United States has initiated a process of dialogue with Afghan Taliban and asked Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for their support in making it result-oriented.... The report, if true, marks a major change in the U.S. policy and has the potential to restore peace not only in the war-ravaged country but in the entire region.... The movement towards peace talks is welcome and offers the only viable solution to the problem."

Editorial: Afghan prospects and Pakistan, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (11/03)

"Washington says it will leave the matter for Afghanistan to settle. Whoever comes to power after the run-off will be acceptable and whichever way the politicians in Kabul unravel the deadlock of Mr. Abdullah's exit from the run-off will be acceptable too. The truth is that the Americans must be trying hard to get an increasingly besieged Karzai to agree to clean up the rigged electoral machinery. They had not done it earlier because they had no credible alternative to him and Mr. Abdullah was considered too hard to maintain in power."

Opinion: Hand Over Power To Hillary Clinton, an op-ed by Javed Chaudhry in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (11/03)

"This is Hillary Clinton - a target 'most wanted' by the Taliban, Al Qaeda and other terrorists. But look at her courage; she moved around easily in 'war-torn' Pakistan, whereas our brave leaders Asif Zardari and Yousaf Raza Gillani have never left their lairs. Try to think of the last time you saw President Zardari out of the Presidency? Such a pleasant occurrence did not happen more than 4 times in the last two years. Have you ever seen your leaders go to Bari Imam, or Iqbal's memorial, or Government College University, or Data Darbar? Never? Why? Because these people have security concerns? Did Hillary Clinton not have any security concerns?... These people [Pakistani leaders] are so scared that when 115 people died in Peshawar, none of our 92 ministers took the trouble of going to Peshawar to wipe people's tears. On the one hand we have such people, yet on the other we have Hillary Clinton, who - by going to Badshahi Mosque, Government College University, Iqbal Memorial, and Bari Imam shrine - proved that she is more capable of leading Pakistan than the Pakistani leaders. Hence, it is my suggestion that power be please handed over to Hillary Clinton; at least she has the courage to go out and meet the public"

Opinion: South Waziristan: Risks and Opportunity, an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/03)

"The ferocious backlash to the South Waziristan operation that Peshawar witnessed last week was a grim reminder of the imposing challenges that lie ahead in the country's struggle against militancy.... The aim has been to shake the official resolve, raise the costs of the military operation and erode public support for actions against the militants. But, as happened earlier, the counter-assaults have so far backfired.... The operation's outcome may well determine the fate not just of the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) but of other militants who have used the Mehsud stronghold to build a deadly capacity to challenge the Pakistani state."

Opinion: The Problem Of Communication Gap, an op-ed by Saleem Safi in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (11/03)

"It will be a grave mistake of the Americans if they think that by a single visit of Secretary Clinton and her meetings with some TV anchorpersons, they will be able to instill their thoughts into the minds of Pakistani people. We will also be wrong that by criticizing the Kerry-Lugar Bill, or by reviling the Americans in TV talk shows, we will succeed in changing their mindset. Our tribal areas and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) are the frontline areas in the war on terror, but during her recent visit, Secretary Clinton was seen discussing the reasons of extremism with the elites of Lahore and Islamabad which speaks volumes about the unawareness of the Americans. They will have to think with Pakistani minds in order to know us. It is also necessary for Pakistanis to think the way they (Americans) think so that we may fully understand the U.S. intentions and priorities."

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: Karzai declared Afghan election winner "Dawn" (11/03)

"Afghan President Hamid Karzai was declared winner of the country's second election Monday by the country's electoral commission after it decided to scrap a planned run-off ballot. Independent Election Commission chairman Azizullah Ludin said.

News Story: Obama backs Karzai, albeit reluctantly "Dawn" (11/03)

"U.S. President Barack Obama telephoned his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai on Monday, hours after he was declared president for the next five years, but the White House said it was not a congratulatory call, said White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs when asked to describe the conversation between the two presidents."

News Story: Senate body seeks report on Blackwater "Daily Times" (11/03)

"The Senate's Standing Committee on Interior on Monday sought a report from the Interior Ministry on the activities of private U.S. security firm Blackwater in Pakistan. Senator Talha Mehmood,

chairing a committee meeting at Parliament House, also sought a report on the total number of U.S. diplomats and other citizens in the country.

News Story: 312 houses hired by Americans in Capital: Ministry "The Nation" (11/03)

"Ministry of Interior has informed Senate Standing Committee on Interior that Americans have hired a total of 312 private houses in different sectors of the Federal Capital where 453 American nationals are living. However, these Americans are divided into two categories; US nationals and Special Americans. According to details, 39 are U.S. nationals who are living in 28 houses, while 414 others fall in second category and they have hired 284 houses, it was further informed on Monday."

Editorial: America's somersault, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/03)

"The world must be shocked by the somersault staged by the US administration over the weekend on its policy on Jewish settlements. Five months ago, President Barack Obama had said categorically in his historic telecast to the Muslim world that he wanted a halt to all settlement activity in the occupied territory.... The Obama administration may waver and dither, but Israel has been shamelessly consistent in its obduracy."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson